

Isophones of the Orthographic *gh*-, *bh*-, *dh*-, etc., and of *h*- in the Ambala District¹

By BANARSI DAS JAIN

THERE is a saying in India that language changes every twelve *kos*.² This saying will still hold good if we say language changes *every kos*, although the amount of change in the latter case will be almost impossible to detect. In spite of this saying, which is correct at bottom, we are apt to believe that our next-door neighbours (if they are not recent strangers) speak exactly the same language as we do. Similarly we also believe that we speak exactly the same language as our parents spoke or our children will speak. But this our belief is not true, for, as a matter of fact, language changes gradually and almost imperceptibly both in time and space. The language of one's neighbours is slightly different from one's own, but when the distance grows and two persons separated by twenty or thirty miles talk together, they are certain to pick up some peculiarities in each other's speech. In the like manner the speech of the children differs from that of the parents, and in the course of a few generations this difference becomes appreciable.

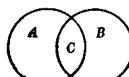
Although on the whole speech varies so gradually from village to village that it is almost impossible to draw a definite line of separation between two neighbouring dialects so that we could say that to one side of this line there is one dialect and to the other side the second, yet geographical division, more or less definite, can be attempted with reference to the following points:—

(1) *Vocables*, i.e. words signifying a particular idea. In the Punjab there are at least three words meaning “the back”—*pith*, *dhui*, *kand*. All the three are not found in one and the same dialect. The area in which each of these predominates can be ascertained, but the

¹ “Lately there has been no lack of would-be new methods, which sometimes have been announced in a rather noisy way. Of real importance is the principle of linguistic geography, which has been illustrated in a series of linguistic atlases and special investigations founded on them. It is hardly necessary to remark how many-sided is the information on the history of words which may be derived from these works.” Holger Pedersen, *Linguistic Science in the Nineteenth Century*, Harvard University Press, 1931, p. 307.

² The implication is that the difference between two languages spoken 12 *kos* apart is appreciable.

boundaries between these areas cannot be determined quite definitely as there will be wide strips intervening between the two areas where both the words spoken in the adjacent areas find currency.



Supposing *A* represents the *dhui*-area and *B* the *pitth*-area, the strip *C* will be such that here both *dhui* and *pitth* are used. The speakers employ these words indiscriminately and find it difficult to decide which is their own and which is foreign.

The lines or bands separating the areas of different vocables are called *isoglosses*.

(2) *Forms*, i.e. different forms of the same word, e.g. *pult*, *puttar*; *tur*, *ṭur*; *pacci*, *panjhī*; *sapp*, *samp*; *kittā*, *kareā*, etc. Experience shows that the lines separating the areas of these forms are also wide, i.e. between the areas there are wide bands where the speakers are not quite certain as to which form they should call their own. These lines or bands may be called *isomorphs*.

(3) *Speech-sounds*.—There are certain speech-sounds which are employed in one area and are absent in its neighbourhood. Such are the voiced and unvoiced *h*, *ṭf* and *ts*, *r* and *rh* (i.e. *r* followed by a vowel in the low tone), various pronunciations of *gh-*, *bh-*, etc., and numerous others. The lines separating the areas of speech-sounds, however, admit of a more definite and precise determination than either of the two factors mentioned above. These lines may be termed *isophones* (or *isotones* if the difference is in tone only).

It will not be without interest to describe here briefly how I became interested in, and what method I followed to investigate the isophones of the initial *gh-*, *bh-*, *dh-*, etc., and of *h-*. This will serve a twofold purpose. Firstly it will indicate, to some extent, the degree of accuracy of the results obtained, and secondly such persons as feel interested in the work and find opportunity may avail themselves of it in collecting more materials.

Everybody comes in contact with speakers of different dialects, and thus gets an opportunity of noting certain points of difference. I became particularly interested in the various pronunciations of the orthographic *gh-*, *bh-*, etc., and *h-*. It was in my school days that I noted the pronunciation of *gh-* in the Bāṅgarū word *ghāl* “to put” to be different from my pronunciation of the same letter in the initial position. Later, in 1908, I found that a class-fellow of mine from

Gujranwala pronounced the *h* in the English words *he, his, behind* differently from the way I did. Still later in 1914 I observed that the pronunciation of *gh, bh* in the words *ghōrā, bhāī, bhain* in the Jubbul dialect (Simla Hills) was quite peculiar and was different from mine and Bāṅgarū pronunciations. About that time I had analysed my pronunciation and had found that the symbols *gh-, bh-, dh-, dh-, jh-* had three distinct values. I brought this to the notice of Mr. A. C. Woolner, who pointed out that two of them were surd and sonant varieties of the same thing. The third was more different. I also discovered that when an unaspirated surd stop was followed by a vowel of the lowest note as in *Ālāp* or solfaing the result was a sound that differed very little from the surd variety of the peculiar pronunciations of *gh-, bh-, etc.* That this peculiarity of pronunciation was due to variation of pitch of vowels was discovered by Dr. T. G. Bailey and announced by Professor Daniel Jones in his lectures on phonetics delivered at Lahore in 1913.

So far I have noted the following values of the initial *gh-, jh-, dh-, dh-, bh-* :—

(1) The voiced stop followed by voiced aspiration. This is the original pronunciation of these symbols and is now found in Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, etc. I shall call it the true pronunciation.

(2) Unvoiced unaspirated stop followed by a vowel in the low-rising tone. This pronunciation is typical of Panjabi, and hence I call it the Panjabi type.

In those areas where the intervocalic *h-* followed by a stressed vowel is lost, and the vowel pronounced in the low-rising tone, the previous voiced unaspirate does not lose its voice, e.g. *dhāī* “wages for placing” (= *dahāī*) is pronounced differently from *dhāī* “two and a half”.

(3) Voiced unaspirated stop followed by a vowel in the low-rising tone. This is the typical value obtained in the districts of Hissar, Rohtak, Karnal, etc., and I call it the Bāṅgarū type.

(4) Voiced unaspirated stop followed by a vowel in the high-falling tone. This pronunciation prevails in the hill dialects about Simla, and I call it the *Pahārī* type.

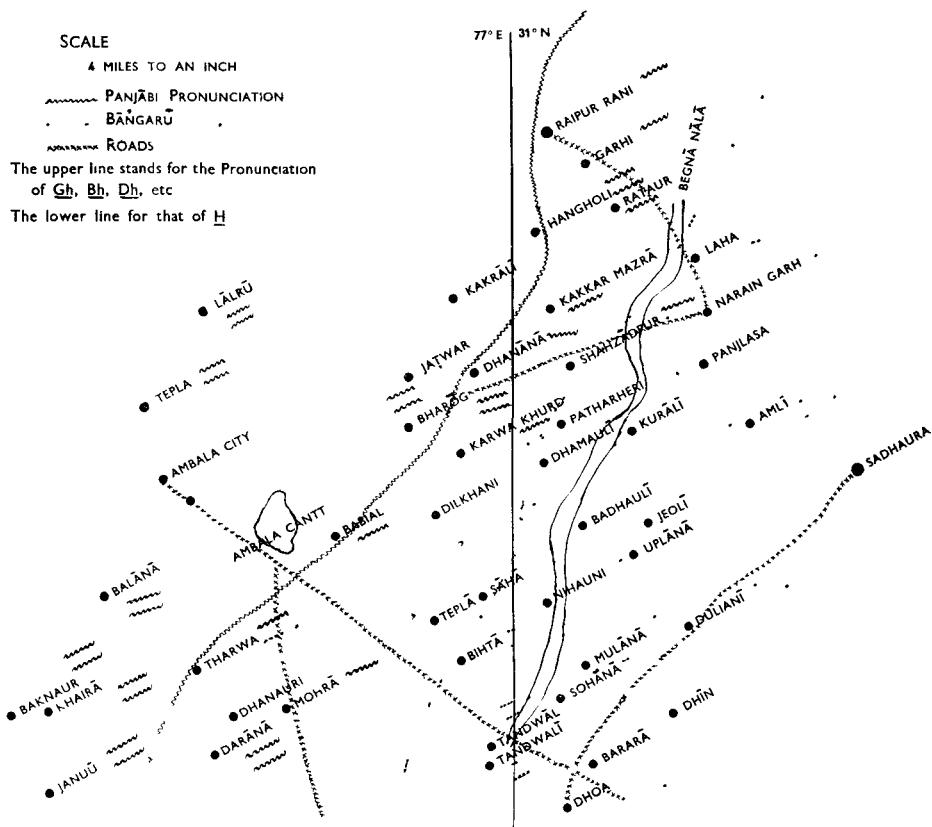
The following values of the initial *h-* have been observed :—

(1) Unvoiced *h-* as in standard English. This pronunciation is found in the districts of Jallandhar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Ferozepore

and the Patiala, Nabha, and Sangrur States. It is also found in Hindustani.

(2) Voiced *h*- followed by a vowel in the low-rising tone. This pronunciation is found in the rest of the Panjabī area and in the Dogri. It is typical of the Bāngarū dialect and I call it the Bāngarū type. Most speakers omit the *h*- also, and in that case the vowel beginning a breath-group is preceded by a glottal stop.

(3) Glottal stop followed by a vowel in the high-falling tone. This pronunciation obtains in the hill dialects about Simla, and I call it the *Pahāyī* type.



While thus paying attention to the pronunciation of *gh*-, *bh*-, *dh*-, etc., and of *h*-, I found that the people from Patiala, Ambala city, and Samana pronounced the *gh*-, *bh*-, *dh*-, etc., in the Panjabī fashion, while those from Jagadharī, Lādhwā, and Shahabad in the Bāngarū fashion. As I had noticed that a speaker giving the Bāngarū

values to these letters seldom gave them the Panjabi values and vice versa, it struck me that a definite line separating these pronunciations could be determined. I, therefore, observed the pronunciation of a number of words beginning with *gh-*, *bh-*, *dh-*, etc., and with *h-* from the lips of the students of schools at Patiala, Ambala, and Karnal, noting down the place from where each had come. In this way I got a rough idea as to the path of the separating line. Some time after I made a tour in small towns and villages and observed the pronunciation of school students there. This resulted in giving me an almost definite line separating the two pronunciations. The names of the places of which pronunciation was observed are shown on the accompanying map.

CONCLUSION

1. On looking at the map it will be seen that when going from Ambala to the east, the pronunciation of *gh-*, *jh-*, *dh-*, and *bh-* changes earlier than that of *h-*. There is a band about six miles wide where the pronunciation of *h-* is Bāṅgarū while that of *gh-*, *jh-*, etc., is Panjabi. To the west of this band the pronunciation of *gh-*, *jh-*, etc., and of *h-* is Panjabi and to the east of it, it is Bāṅgarū.
2. The line separating the pronunciation *gh-*, *jh-*, *dh-*, *bh-*, and *h-* travels roughly along the Begna stream.
3. Another fact brought to notice by this investigation is that the compensatory lengthening of vowels before old consonant groups, e.g. Skt. *hasta-*, H. *hāth*, Panj. *hatth*, first appears in this intervening band.
4. The rise and fall of the musical tones is not the same everywhere. In some places the difference is quite distinct. This requires a still closer study.